

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Jack T. Nagoshi

Jack T. Nagoshi, son of Hisashi and Hatsuyo Nagoshi, was born in Hanapēpē, Kaua'i on June 9, 1926. He graduated from Waimea High School.

In 1951 he received his bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa where he later received his master's degree in social work.

Between 1953 and 1957 he served as executive secretary of the Mō'ili'ili Community Association. He then served five years as the head of the Hawai'i State Commission on Children and Youth. From 1962 to 1964 he was executive director of Pālama Settlement.

Beginning, in 1964, with the Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Development Center, Nagoshi focussed on youth research at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. He also served on the boards of numerous community organizations and social welfare agencies.

Now retired, Nagoshi and his wife, Elsie, reside in Mānoa. The Nagoshis raised two children.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Jack T. Nagoshi (JN)

Honolulu, O'ahu

April 18, 1997

BY: Michi Kodama-Nishimoto (MK)

MK: This an interview with Mr. Jack Nagoshi at his home in Mānoa, Honolulu, O'ahu, on April 18, 1997. The interviewer is Michiko Kodama-Nishimoto.

Okay, Mr. Nagoshi, I'm going to start the interview now, and the first question is when and where you were born.

JN: On Kaua'i, [June 9], 1926.

MK: And what . . .

JN: Hanapēpē, Kaua'i.

MK: Back then, what number were you in the family in terms of siblings?

JN: I was the second boy, family of three, [with] an older brother and a younger sister.

MK: And I know that your mother's name was Hatsuyo, your father's, Hisashi.

JN: Hisashi, yeah.

MK: And what do you remember about their background?

JN: Background, you mean what they did, or schooling?

MK: Mm hmm [yes].

JN: Well, education was very limited. My father, in Japan, finished sixth grade. My mother, I have very only faint memory of her education. I think she probably went through third grade, or something like that, working in a plantation. Workwise, my mom worked on a farm; we had a farm. And my grandfather was living with us for quite a while. And he got hold of a homesteading in sugarcane, which was very unique, you know. Maybe about five, six acres of land. And so he got [into] sugarcane [cultivation]. The plantation, McBryde [Sugar Company] plantation in this case, would plant the cane and then after it's planted, then my father's job was to grow it. And after, when it's ready for harvesting, they would come in and harvest the

cane. Was pretty neat arrangement, you know. And I think for a while, McBryde was getting kind of tired of that little farm, that, (chuckles) you know, working on five acres of land. But they couldn't get rid of him because that was a law. Somehow, they couldn't get rid of him. And so he continued that.

He had a rice mill, and he milled all the rice from Hanapēpē Valley and Waimea Valley. All the rice came to his rice mill. And then he—on the side—he peddled vegetables for the farmers that were living in Hanapēpē Valley, particularly. He'd take that out and take it out to market for them.

MK: Did he grow any rice himself?

JN: Grandfather did. And so I have no memory of growing rice in the field. My memory starts from cane, the cane field. But I think for a while my father was employed by contractors as a mason. He was good with his hands, yeah. I learned a lot from him, just working with him. Mom was helping around on the farm. She never worked outside for any wages, or anything like that.

MK: And what part of Japan did your family come from?

JN: Oh. My mom's [family is] from Yamaguchi-ken. Because of the emphasis in Japan on the sons and not the daughters, what happened was, the emphasis has been on my father's side. He was born in Hiroshima, Hiba-gun. And at age of thirteen, he, as a immigrant, came to Hawai'i to work in the plantation. That's Makaweli plantation. My mom was born in Makaweli [Sugar Company], a *shimpai* marriage, you know. And then they decided to get out of the plantation and do their own farming, as I mentioned to you earlier.

So the Japan connection has been largely, in fact, almost 100 percent with my father's side. They're still living there. We manage to have some contact with them. As a matter of fact, my cousin just returned from a tour of part of Japan just recently. And he brought some things that they wanted to give to me, you know, *omiage*. So there's still that connection. And my aunt, both of them, I have two aunts living in Hiba-gun right now. And my older one was in high school, Waimea High School, and younger was probably about eighth grade or something like that. But they packed their bags and left Hawai'i for Japan. And then they got stuck with the war [World War II]. They stayed on the farm and they farmed, the years go by, you know. And what happened was, they never returned.

MK: How did those aunts go back to Japan?

JN: They were forced to. One, the one that—Yasuko is her name. She was in high school and she just resisted going to Japan. And when they finally convinced her that she should go, in Japan she almost ran away. She just didn't want to stay there. And you can imagine a high school girl, that's all she knew, the island. And then to pack up and leave, what emotional impact that had. But she managed, I guess. Her husband recently died. She worked on the farm all the way through. Her back is such that she can't even sit up or stand up straight. I felt really sorry for her.

MK: Economically, how was your family faring on Kaua'i?

- JN: I thought was pretty good. I don't know the finances at that time, but I know that—I hear gossip, people talking and kids talking and so on—that the Nagoshis had money. Not lots of money, but that they have money. So I did notice that a good number of the farmers would come and borrow five dollars—those days five dollars was a lot of money—ten dollars, kind of thing. “Can you help me with ten dollars to tide me over the month? And next month we'll harvest the rice, and we'll take care of the expense.” Anyway, I don't think we were in poverty, while the others, most of them, good lot of them, were living under conditions of poverty. But I think it's because of the variety of work that my grandfather and father was involved in.
- MK: And you mentioned that you were living in Hanapēpē. What part of Hanapēpē were you living in?
- JN: Up in the valley. The last house in the valley was the Nagoshi house. (Chuckles) That's about mile and a half from Hanapēpē town.
- MK: So since you were way inside the valley, growing up as a child there, who did you have as playmates, and what did you do?
- JN: Oh we had a lot of. . . . That year, two houses away was a person that was my classmate. Next house has two boys, about the same age. The next one had about another two or three boys about the same [age]. We had a lot of kids around. Of course, we were quite busy on the farm. When you have a farm you don't have much time to play. But at times we'd get together, play ball in our yard.
- MK: So growing up on a farm, what sorts of chores were you expected to do?
- JN: Feed the chickens, feed the hogs. Did a lot of hoeing and shoveling and so on in the cane field, I recall. And then the seasonal rice mill—the rice planters would plant rice twice a year, and the harvest comes in the summer and then another one in December. So when they harvest rice then the rice mill gets busy. So helped in the rice mill quite a bit. I would say this: I think where most of the kids didn't have much to do, they were playing, I was stuck in the rice mill, the little chores that I could handle, and I had to do it. I had to be there. In fact, when the war broke out in 1941, we were in the rice mill. We were grinding the rice. And then about nine o'clock in the morning, the police came and told us to go home. “There's a war. Go home.” So we went home. Just shut it down and (chuckles) went home.
- MK: So you did a lot of work, then, as a boy.
- JN: I did, I did, yeah.
- MK: And I was wondering, what schools you attended?
- JN: 'Ele'ele School. It's up on a hill. That's a good mile and a half or two miles from the farm. 'Ele'ele School up through eighth grade, and Waimea High School. And most of the high school experience is wartime. So hardly any work to be done in the classroom. In fact, the first year, that was my sophomore year, and that's the year that the war broke out, we did our academic work, or at least schooling, in 'Ele'ele School. We couldn't travel to Waimea, you know. All we did was loaf around, that's all, really, when you really come down to it. My

junior year, we were busy most of the time stringing barbed wires along the beach. And (chuckles) you know, finally the senior year we got down to business and started to do some academic work. (Chuckles)

MK: And you know, like, when you were doing the barbed wiring of the beach, were you folks compensated for that?

JN: Yeah, we got small wages, though. Fifty cents a day, or something like that. I forgot what it was, (chuckles) but. But, those were war years, and you couldn't predict what would happen. When I was a senior, that year we were going graduate anyway, American Factors, [Ltd.] on Kaua'i had a job opening for a truck driver. I used to drive my father's truck in the rice mill. They said they wanted someone with a little experience, so they asked me if I was interested. I said, "Oh, okay." If it's a job, it's a job. So I went to see the personnel person, and he hired me.

So I went to see the principal of the high school, [to ask] whether I'll get my diploma. This is about March of my senior year. And the principal said, "Yeah, we'll get you your diploma. Don't worry about it."

So I quit school and went to work. And then I was---I had befriended a dentist's son—he died. They were very affluent. And he told me that they were having entrance exam for UH [University of Hawai'i]. He said, "Why don't you take the exam anyway?"

I said, "Oh, forget it. I'll never pass that kind of exam. Hardly went to school, hardly went to high school."

And he said, "No, no, let's try, let's try."

So I said, "Oh, okay. Let's go."

So we went to take the exam. And by golly I passed the damn exam!

(Laughter)

JN: So I think my classmates in particular were very surprised that, "What? He's going to college? Oh my goodness." (Chuckles)

MK: What year did you graduate from Waimea?

JN: [Nineteen] forty-four. Mm hmm.

MK: And up to the time you took that exam, what were your aspirations for the future?

JN: Nothing, because of uncertainty. The war was going on, my friends were already getting drafted, you know, and my brother was already in the 442nd [Regimental Combat Team]. So all this uncertainty going on. We lived day by day, so we don't think about the future. Of course, we know that we going to get drafted at one time or another, and the day is going to come.

MK: And then what did your parents think about the situation?

JN: Well, I don't think that they expected me to go to college, because they wanted my brother to go. (Chuckles) After all, the *chōnan*, you know, the oldest son takes over, kind of thing. And the emphasis is there. And the *jinan* or the second son kind of has to fend for himself. So I asked my father whether he'll support me if I go to college. He said, "I hope it doesn't cost too much," something like that, but (MK chuckles) "we'll manage somehow." And in his head was that there's a war going on and he's [JN] going to get drafted anyway, and so on. I was up at UH [University of Hawai'i] for about a year, then I got my draft call. Then after that, well, after I got back from military service, about two years, I got the GI Bill [of Rights]. That helped me (almost) through graduate school.

MK: Going back a little bit, given the fact that your father was farming, and had a rice mill, and war was on, and he was of Japanese ancestry, immigrant, what happened to your father and mother during the war?

JN: Father and mother? In what ways, you mean?

MK: In those days, many prominent Japanese were interned.

JN: Oh, interned?

MK: In your situation, what happened?

JN: The FBI came over to the house a couple of times, searched—ransacked the house. I don't know what they were looking for, but they were looking for something. Probably some radio transmitter or whatever it is. And they [FBI] just left and never came back. I think what they found was that his work was essential, particularly the rice mill. If he doesn't have the rice mill, and if he's not there, that is, then what would the farmers do? All the farmers in Hanapēpē Valley and Waimea Valley. So I think they found that to be essential. So that's the reason why, I think, he wasn't interned. But he was being investigated, his background and stuff like that. Then when I was in the military service they did a search of all those that gets into the counterintelligence corps—I don't know what they called it—but investigate and check their background, and no subversive kind of activities. So that kind of thing was happening.

My parents, by and large, lived for the children, I guess, on your question of, "What were they doing." They continued on because of, I think, the rice mill saved them. Otherwise they probably would have been interned. Because my dad was pretty much into Japanese-[language] school. He served as the president of the PTA, and that kind of thing. The Japanese organization, he was very active in. So one by one, you could see them being interned, those that were officers and so on. But they [JN's parents] managed to stay put.

MK: And then, what year were you drafted?

JN: [Nineteen] forty-six. The war was just ending. (Chuckles) And they were already closing out the Presidio, Monterey where we were and they had schooling for interpreters and translators. So I went directly to Japan and got into the [U.S. Counter Intelligence] Corps. Took several exams, you know. What surprised me was that my Japanese wasn't that great. But I did pretty good in English. They did examine me in both English and Japanese. So something like—I'm

bragging, but—something like I scored number one in English and number two in Japanese.

MK: And how much training in Japanese had you had?

JN: I went through eighth grade. Other than that, we had a refresher course in Tokyo when I was there. And nothing much, except for self learning.

MK: And when you became a part of the [U.S.] Counter Intelligence Corps, what was your job?

JN: Really, what we were doing was, we were looking at, or at least investigating the Communist movement. There were a lot of repatriates (going) back to Japan, and lot of them were indoctrinated on communism, and communism was spreading in Japan proper. And we were to get information on that movement. So essentially, we worked with the police department, and checked on all the meetings that that Communist Party was doing, and their movement here and there. Slowly that was dissipating. I guess there wasn't too much use for it. But essentially that was what it was. I couldn't see us—I couldn't see the value of all of that. (Laughs)

MK: So for two years in Japan you were sort of surveying Communist activities in Japan?

JN: Yeah, we were looking at their activities and reporting all—I guess the central headquarters would put pieces together. And we send in information. All the other counterintelligence corps offices would bring in information from all over Japan, and they would put it together and see what it was like. But I wasn't involved in that kind of a shenanigan. (Laughs)

MK: And then, were there other men from Hawai'i that you were familiar with in that corps?

JN: No. There were seven of us. Out of the seven, two were Caucasian, and five Japanese Americans. (Among) Japanese Americans, I was from Hawai'i, all four of them were *kotonks*.

(Laughter)

JN: Interesting, yeah? (Laughs)

MK: Yeah, that must have been an experience in itself.

JN: Yeah. I got to know them pretty well. And we were kind of—appreciated all that experience, you know. 'Cause they're little different. You're not a *kotonk*, are you?

MK: No.

JN: Yeah, they're a little different, you know. Hawai'i people are so---they're different in, like, sharing things. If we got a box of cookies from home, we just take 'em out there, "Hey, eat up you guys." The *kotonks* would tend to stay by themselves and eat their own. There isn't too much of that sharing. When we go to the PX [post exchange] we would get beer. We would buy beer for everybody. *Kotonks* would come sit with us, but they have their own beer.

(Laughter)

MK: So that was interesting experience for you to be with *kotonks*, especially for a boy that came

from (Hanapēpē), Kaua'i.

JN: Yeah, right, right. I befriended them, one of them and I became very good, close friends. He was from, Monterey, [California].

MK: And during that time in Japan, what were your thoughts about your own future?

JN: Go to school and finish up. In fact, two or three months before my time was up, they asked me to consider re-enlisting, with a promise of promotions, and stuff like that. I never took that on because in my mind was I better finish that education of mine. I only finished one year, I better get going on that. And then I can think about what to do in the future. That one year that I was there [University of Hawai'i], [out] of high school, I majored in agriculture, tropical agriculture. The only reason why I majored in agriculture was because we had a farm. You know, making that kind of a connection. I didn't know anything what was in store for me. So when I got back from military (service) and got back to school, I said, "I don't think I'm going to like agriculture. I think I better change my major. Now, what am I going to major in?" I said, "Gee, well, maybe for practical matter maybe I'll get into the field of accounting." So I changed my major when I got back to get into accounting.

After about one semester or so, I found out that I would be way behind. You know, they have required courses and so on. I got to make that up before I get into advanced courses. So I said, "Oh, boy, that's too much. I gotta finish my education and get out of here and get out to work." So I changed my major.

Oh, what happened that time was, there was a serious shortage of teachers. So they had what they called the emergency teacher training program, something like that. And they were asking students in arts and sciences if they wouldn't sign up for that. In one year's time you get out there in the classroom. And then they'd make up [classes] in subsequent summers. So I got into that program. I went as far as observation, participation in the classroom, and all that. I told myself, "Gee, can you imagine yourself doing this day in and day out? Month after month, year after year?" I said, "I don't think so." So I got out.

Somehow, I was doing better gradewise in psychology. And it wasn't too time consuming because it's quick; thirty credits was all it required, I think, I forgot now. And so thirty credits is nothing. You can do it in very short period of time. So I said, "Okay, I'll go major in psychology then." And I did. And I liked sociology too. So I finished up my bachelor's in three years.

Then my friends were suggesting, "Hey, why don't we go to grad school. [The School of] Social Work is looking for students you know."

And I said, "Okay. Let's take a look at it."

In fact, what happened was there were job offers already. Probation officers on O'ahu, Maui—I recall, (the late) August Markham wanted some people to work there. There were jobs all over the place at that time. I was interviewed on Kaua'i because I wanted to go back to my own island, YMCA [Young Men's Christian Association] work. Never did that before, but job is a job. No, I turned it all down.

My friends said, "Let's go to school. We get little more of the GI Bill left yet. Maybe take care of us till we finish."

Said, "Oh, okay. One more year of loafing around, then." (Chuckles)

So I did my graduate studies here and—let's see—in social work, of course, and then . . .

MK: What was your area of specialty in social work?

JN: In social work? I started off in group work, and then I was moving toward community organization. And they were more interesting. Probably, the interest in research started around there. While I was taking undergraduate courses I liked research. In fact, I would take a research course in sociology that students would all hate to take. They dread to take the research course in sociology. I would take it as an elective. I'd take a research course in psychology, research course in sociology (also). They would look at me and say, "Jack, you dumb old---why the hell you want to do that for? We all don't want that course. You, you take it as an elective."

I tell, "Well, kind of fun," you know. I like research. So that interest in research carried me through. Like when I worked with [the Hawai'i State] Commission on Children and Youth [1957-62], it was, I would say, 50 percent research. The executive secretary is, I think, expected to have some research skills, to have the research mind. I think Jennie [In] would probably agree with me on this. My interest in research had helped me a lot in the commission work. And I think the seriousness of looking at research data came to my mind. So what are we talking about? We always talk about this is so, and (that) is so, but we never look at evidence or research evidence. So that helped me a lot, that kind of orientation.

MK: So when you were in the social work program, what sorts of opportunities did you have to do research?

JN: Not much. Not much. With the exception that there was a research course that we all had to take. Which I continued to like. Then after we---after academic---you got any other question on academic work?

MK: I was also wondering, Jennie mentioned that she had certain mentors in the school of social work. For yourself . . .

JN: Did I have any?

MK: . . . did you have any mentors?

JN: No, I don't think so. (Chuckles) I don't think so.

MK: And in those days when you were interested in research, were there specific areas of research that really attracted you?

JN: Not particularly. I'm just trying to think at that time, what was in my mind. Well, for one thing, I know, I don't think I got along with the faculty too well, okay. My first revolt came when I went to see Kay [Katherine N.] Handley. Kay Handley used to be the dean of that

school. In those days they called her the director of the School of Social Work. And, oh, group work was getting to me. And I kind of began to dislike that group work stuff. And I think there weren't any jobs too, for group workers. Where do you go? So I wanted to change to casework. And they gave me a bad time. And they gave me a bad time because, I think, there was shortage of people in group work to justify having that program, like five students, and they should have about twenty. In my mind, I was thinking, why are they making a decision based on their needs, which is enough students to make it a program? Why punish me for that? That's not my fault. And the thing was, I think, I verbalized that to the faculty.

And another example was, I did my second-year field placement at—at that time they called it the bureau of mental hygiene, it's [part of] the health department. And I was trying to do some group work there, and then do some casework. And I had an opportunity of writing up a commitment to [Hawai'i] State Hospital for a kid, and I regret it very much on what that decision was. That kid should never have been institutionalized. It really had an impact on me. And I voiced this. I said, "What damage you doing—" not in these words, that we causing more grief and more harm to this kid and the parents by committing him to the state hospital, and so on. One of the faculty members, I think, was involved in all this dialoging and discussion. To a point where he wouldn't sign my thesis. We all were required to write a thesis, and those days we did individual theses, not group theses. And final analysis, well, at least if you get one signature, that's fine. But he would just refuse to sign my thesis. (Chuckles)

MK: But without that professor's signature . . .

JN: Without it.

MK: . . . it was acceptable?

JN: Acceptable, yeah. So after that, I guess in some sense, I was able to rebel against something that was unfair. And my orientation throughout my career has been that. For instance, to me a big surprise was that the social work profession was disorienting itself to the needs of the poor. And when the War on Poverty came in, I thought that was a good opportunity to make this known, that we are not orienting ourselves to the needs of the poor, which we should, and social work professionals should. And I think from the first time, I'd done a good deal of reading on the subject matter. Shig [Shigemitsu] Nakashima is Janet's husband. I saw Shig one day, I asked Shig, "Hey, look, this disorientation from the poor, what about Child and Family Services?" He was with Child and Family Services at the time. "What about Child and Family Services. You guys have any knowledge as to how to deal with the problems of the poor?"

He says, "You know, we don't have that because most if not all of our clients are not from the ranks of the poor."

I said, "What! You mean to tell me that you're serving the middle class rather than the poor where the needs are greatest?"

He said, "Yeah, that's how it is."

I remember Shig telling me that, you know. So I felt that's an area that I would like to have much more involvement in. And I think if there's any ego involvement and ego satisfaction,

it's that particular area that I explored a little bit more. And I did a lot of speech making, writing on the subject of the poor, and I got a big bang out of it.

MK: What first got you interested in that particular subject?

JN: Basically, I think my interest was in that area. And I think that's the reason why I was revolting against what was going on, in a quiet way, but within myself, that these are things that are happening. Pālama Settlement, for instance. They were disengaging themselves from the needs of the people in the community, and that's where the [Harleigh] Trecker report came in. And I looked at that as, this is no different from other agencies on what they're doing. But how extensive is this? And when I was hired, one of the things that bothered the board of trustees and [Harleigh] Trecker himself—but Trecker, he's a smart cookie, you know. I think he had lot of canned stuff that he would have said to anybody, and make it like he got information and ideas from the Pālama Settlement. But I think he already had all this stuff, and, "Here it is," kind of thing. But nevertheless, it was pretty good stuff. I wouldn't say that it was not useful, I think it was useful. But I think Pālama has moved away. . . . I asked Mary Sabala—maybe you want to interview her, too—Mary Sabala was the teacher of the preschool program at a settlement house for a number of years. And I asked her, "How many of your kids are from Pālama neighborhood?" And we spelled out geographically what the Pālama neighborhood is. Little arbitrary, but still you can tell. And. . . . I lost my (chuckles) train of thought.

MK: So you figured out what the geographic area for Pālama was . . .

JN: Oh, okay.

MK: . . . and you were talking to Mary Sabala about the children and where they were from.

JN: Yeah. And so Mary told me that, "Yeah, I think Trecker is right." At least she knows that the preschool program is not gearing its efforts to the needs of the community.

I said, "Can you change that?"

She says to me, "Very, very difficult to change," because she has her clientele which—she was doing a damn good job, you know. And people from all over were dropping their children there. From Kailua way, Kāne'ohe way, to up—probably from Wai'anae, too. It's a convenient place too. You work downtown, they can drop their children off at Pālama, and they were back to work. So she said that majority of the children are not from Pālama area.

But that's one area. Then there were many other areas. Swim club. You know [Harry] Mamizuka? Looking at the swim club participants, where do they come from? We didn't do it formally, but talking to Mamizuka, talking to Earlene [Piko], for instance, I got a real feeling that they are not serving the needs of the people in the community. Music school, another one. They just moved away from the needs of the poor. Because the poor are more difficult to approach, they're more difficult to bring together, for a kind of a involved, meaningful kind of activity. . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

MK: Okay.

JN: Okay. So anyway, from where I sat at that point in time, I thought that the board had committed itself to the Trecker report. But probably, a good number of the board members didn't comprehend it in depth, what does that involve, you know. I doubt whether the staff understood, too, what the mission was, and what the new mission ought to be. And to some degree, I'm not so sure I was. What does this report mean? How do you implement the recommendations contained in that report? Easier said than done. But those answers were not in that report. And I don't think Trecker would have been able to tell us that. And I said, again, I think this is pretty much canned, and he would have done that to any other community.

MK: You know, going back a little bit, I know that before you started working at Pālama Settlement, you had graduated with your social work degree in 1953, and from 1953 to '57 you were the executive secretary of the Mō'ili'ili Community Association.

JN: Mō'ili'ili. Mm hmm, yeah.

MK: What was your work there?

JN: (Sighs) Well, the reason why I got interested in that community was that there was that community organization part that I mentioned to you earlier in the School of Social Work, what I was interested in. Well, community organization research. And I felt that they would give me some experience in working in the community, working with organizations in the community, and my first experience dealing with a board, which is something else in itself. And I learned a hell of a lot. Now, that community is primarily Japanese. So to understand that is not very difficult for me. I'm Japanese, so it's easier to understand how they function and how they think, and so on. But it provided me with a great deal of good, solid, I would say, education on how a community works. The power structure, and how to run an operation like that.

MK: In those days, what sort of clientele did Mō'ili'ili Community Association serve?

JN: It was the middle class, when you really come down to it. People who wanted to learn something from some culture and arts kind of a program. Doing things with their hands, dancing, and that kind of arts. I think working with—at that time they called it Community Chest, funding kind of things, going out for contributions, and running a *bon* dance (chuckles) and a carnival. And working with the people in the community in that kind of way. They had their problems. I think those that participate, participated well. But a great majority of them are nonparticipants when you really come down to it.

MK: In those days were children and teenagers also served by Mō'ili'ili . . .

JN: Yeah, yeah.

MK: . . . in addition to adults?

JN: Yeah, there were some club programs that met there. We had a---I revised their summer fun program. It used be mostly classes: classes for woodworking, classes for arts and crafts, and that kind of thing. They would go from class to class. My interest again, in group work is to provide a little more enriching kind of activities. And so I changed the summer program format. I made a lot of people unhappy on that, too. (Chuckles) Because it meant a different group of people doing the work. But nevertheless, I—the board said, “Go ahead and make your changes.”

“Okay, I’ll make the changes, then.”

Sometimes I tended to be too abrupt and too quick. Like Pālama Settlement, when they mentioned that the board decided that we should patronize local business rather than business outside, I said, “Fine. I think that’s a good policy.”

The very next week, following week, I changed my bank account from Bank of Hawai‘i to American Security. No, I didn’t change it yet, I asked them to do it. I asked my bookkeeper to do the transferring. Wow! I got telephone calls from big business people that, “You sure you don’t want to change your mind?”

They called the board of trustees members who would call me back and say that, “You know that thing about changing the bank? Can you think about that for a little while longer?” In a polite way, of course, telling me that maybe that’s the wrong decision.

But I said, “The board has given me the authorization one week ago to make these changes. So I ordered them to make the change.”

Then I get some nice explanation from—but not adequate—from some of the board members, and I said, “Okay, okay. You guys win. Now I know where I stand on this thing.” (Chuckles) There were so many little things here and there that is affecting, you know. . . .

Preschool program, after that information on the number of kids that come from that indigent neighborhood, I asked Mary that, “If this is so, then we gotta do something about it. We can’t just let this prolong, because you’re going to have to let the parents know, the kids who have to be placed elsewhere,” and so you got some problems out there, you know, for these. . . . And it’s not fair to abruptly say, “We’re going to close down.”

When I made some decisions that we will close down, we had people who were supporting the preschool program come and they did talk to other board members that, “Hey, yeah. Maybe we should wait on this thing.”

But I said, “That’s the policy. The policy already been determined by the board.”

But I wasn’t going argue forever on this thing, I’d make it a little more uncomfortable for myself, too, you know. But nevertheless, the Trecker report does come up with some things.

MK: You know, we’re getting more and more into Pālama Settlement. Before we get more into Pālama Settlement, I just want to put into the record, that between ’57 and ’62, following your experience with Mō‘ili‘ili Community Association, you were with the Hawai‘i State Commission on Children and Youth. You were the executive secretary. Now, what did that

work involve?

JN: Oh. Well, essentially it was like working with a, like a board of directors. It's a commission. And they're supposed to be commissioned by the legislature and the governor to assess the needs of children and youths in the state of Hawai'i. And then to recommend ways in which they can resolve some of these problems, to be done through adequate research, and bring in agency heads together. So on the commission were people who were directors of the Department of Education, Department of Social Services, juvenile court at that time, labor and industrial relations, and health department [i.e., Department of Health]. The directors of these departments were to serve ex-officio on the commission. And hopefully, by bringing this group together, that they can resolve some of the problems that remained in the community. Okay, that's overall picture, I think. Maybe Jennie---did you interview Jennie already?

MK: Mm hmm [yes].

JN: Maybe she could articulate better on that. But did she tell you that too, essentially?

MK: Mm hmm.

JN: Well, I think that number one is that they lack adequate staffing. It's a one-man show, with myself and the secretary. And I think it took a while before you realized that maybe you biting too much into what can be done. But cannot help, you know. People are asking for this kind of a study to be done here. Commissioners ask that. So the workload piles up. And as the workload piles up you begin to touch bases here and there, very likely unable to go into depth into research, real research. It was frustrating, but that was a big hang-up, I think, with the commission. And for me, it was a matter of working with the commission. Same thing like working with the board of directors of the Mō'ili'ili Community Association. Lot of patience involved.

MK: So by the time you came to Pālama, you had many years of experience working with boards.

JN: Yeah. In a way, after Pālama, I've had it. (Laughs)

MK: I was wondering, how did you end up getting the job at Pālama Settlement?

JN: Oh, well, I applied and . . .

MK: Why did you apply? Why did you want that job?

JN: Pālama Settlement?

MK: Mm hmm.

JN: I tell you, I've always dreamed that one day I would like to be the director of that settlement house. From the time that I worked there as a summer counselor, camp counselor, I thought it would be a terrific thing if I could sit in that seat over there. I don't know, it's just kind of like a dream. But I am—I hate to boast about this, but I'll tell you anyway—I'm the type of individual that don't want to rely on other people to get a job. I want to get a job or a promotion or whatever on my own merits. And I don't want to go ask a politician to talk to

thus and so, and so on. I've never done that; to give a good word for me, or that kind. And I don't like people doing that when I'm hiring somebody. So when you ask me how I got the job at Pālama Settlement from the commission, I had just applied. I heard there was a vacancy. I went to talk to Lorin Gill [then Pālama Settlement social worker, later executive director 1964–69] one time, because I wanted to know what was involved, and all about—not all about, but what Trecker was trying to do. Lorin was very familiar with all these things. So just to get me refreshed on what was the situation. And I applied.

I think I had backing from the people like [family court] judge (the late) [Gerald R.] Corbett [former Pālama Settlement trustee]. The judge and I got along very well. I liked his philosophy. Probation officers disliked him, by and large, because—and I don't blame the probation officers, and I've talked to a number of probation officers on this issue, which is, the judge is too lenient. They would show me—probation officers—a folder full of names. You see this one person has committed all of these crimes, and the judge still put him on probation. And probation officers (were) very angry. I talked to the judge about that. And I understood what he was trying to do. He told me that, "If I commit these kids, the chances of them ending up in O'ahu prison is very, very great. And I can't do that. If I think that there is even one iota of difference that this kid can make it, if we can carry him over maybe just a little bit more, I'm gonna give him that chance."

I said, "Judge, I'm with you."

But anyway, he and I got along very well in our thinking. And I think he supported me on the Pālama job. But I applied.

MK: I know at that time, it came out in the news about Arne [E.] Larson being fired [as executive director in 1962], and the findings of the Trecker report were in the newspaper, and the recommendations. All this was out in the media before you became director. What did you think about Arne Larson, Pālama Settlement, and the Trecker report before you started as executive director? What did you think of the situation?

JN: Not much. Because I didn't know Larson. I didn't know him at all. I don't think I even shook his hand even once. The Trecker report, I got hold of that after I got in. It wasn't available to me to study, you know. And other than Lorin Gill, I didn't know anybody. But Lorin and I were classmates, see. From undergraduate to graduate school. I didn't know him as an undergraduate, but I got to know him very well in graduate school.

MK: And then you mentioned that you worked at Pālama one summer as a counselor.

JN: Two summers. .

MK: Two summers?

JN: Yeah.

MK: Tell me about that experience before we get into your executive directorship.

JN: It was a tremendous experience. My first time that I had ever worked really intimately with kids from the ranks of the poor. And by golly, I got to like them. Once---well, I worked two

summers in a row, summer camp. This is way out in Hale'iwa. And the third summer I missed them. So I took several trips to Pālama [fresh air] camp just to see the kids, you know. "Oh, you were there last year," and so on. I thought that was heartwarming for me. That's the kind of thing that I'd like to get little bit more involved in probably at (the) moment.

And so as far as Larson is concerned, I don't know him, I never knew him. I'm not so sure I'm answering your question.

MK: Yeah, you are. And then I was wondering, when you were applying for the executive directorship, already you were a professional social worker, you had headed organizations dealing with children and youth, and community groups. In that professional field, what was the general reputation of Pālama Settlement at that time?

JN: I don't know. I didn't know at that time. Except for what I saw on the surface, which most people read in the paper would probably have anyway. That's where the kids go to swim, they go to gym to play basketball. The details of what they were really doing or what Trecker is telling them to shift over, I knew very little about. But I thought that my summer experience with the kids—and then you get involved with the parents too as you work with the kids. And I have no problem with that. I have no problem with talking to people with—indigenous people, and I'm not afraid of that. And I'm not afraid of talking to kids, too. One time, just as an example, there were a bunch of teenage boys that were giving the staff a bad time. They had come in drunk when they have a canteen—those days they used to have canteens. They'd come in drunk, disrupt the place, and then sometimes, oftentimes they'd break things, and so on. And the staff was getting very, very perturbed about the whole thing. They said they tried everything. "Either we shut down, or we gotta do something much more drastic."

And Lorin said that, yup, he tried anything, and it's just not working. Just ready to give up. So Lorin said, "Jack, you think you could talk to the kids?"

Well now, what I'm going to talk to them about? I didn't say it to him, but I'm thinking to myself, what am I going to talk to them about, you know? (Chuckles)

But he said kind of last straw, maybe, that the executive director has to talk to the group of kids who's giving the staff and the other kids a bad time.

I said, "Okay, I'll meet with them. Can you tell the kids to meet me in the evening of a certain date?" And the kids came. Those days, we're talking about brawny kids, you know. They're double my size. And quite a session with them. It's kind of a long story on that—but essentially what happened was that I was listening to what gripes they had. They expected me to scold them or lecture them on their behavior, getting drunk and so on. But I didn't do that. At least in the beginning I didn't do that. I asked them what they were doing, not bad things they were doing, what do they do, how is school, or how the schools are treating them, how the teachers are treating them and so on. And hardly mentioned anything about their behavior. I think that helped a lot, that I didn't call on them to punish them, and they all expected me to say that, "Well, don't come here anymore. You guys stay out of this place."

And then I left it up to the staff to be consistent in dealing with the kids, that, you don't go and—not in these words, now—but you don't lecture the kids on what is right and what is wrong. Find out what their needs are, and see whether they can cope with that. And also, let

the kids know that there are hundreds of other kids that want to enjoy themselves, and they too have the right to participate in these activities. Make that clear that they're not only spoiling it for themselves, but they're spoiling it for the other kids, too. So where are we now? (Chuckles)

MK: Did that resolve the situation?

JN: Oh, it did. Amazingly. I never expected to resolve it, you know. So we were looking at the following Friday—and Friday nights were canteen nights—following Friday, what would happen. Well, I didn't stay there. I told them that I'm not going to be around. Let's see if things work out. So everybody was on pins and needles on that Friday. And the kids came in sober. (MK chuckles.) And they enjoyed themselves, I guess. And so I was at home, and Lorin calls me over the phone, he says, "Hey! What you did to the kids!"

I said, "Well, it worked." I said, "I don't know what I did but it worked." (Chuckles) But I (said), "You know, I think we need to listen a little bit more." And maybe they have that need, to voice their feelings, and so on. And maybe they like to be reminded, too, that there are other hundreds of other kids that have the same kind of needs, too.

MK: So when you took the job of executive director, you had tasks just like the one you described. But I'm wondering, since you were hired following the firing of Arne Larson, and following the Harleigh Trecker report, what did you think about the problems noted by Trecker? You kind of went over some of the things. Trecker had said that you're not serving the Pālama community, and you talked about the preschool situation, the swimming club, the music school. What are your thoughts on the other problems that the Trecker report noted?

JN: Oh. I forgot already. (Chuckles)

MK: I can---what I'll do is . . .

JN: What are some of the issues . . .

MK: . . . I can . . .

JN: . . . you have it down someplace?

MK: . . . I can kind of go over some of the issues that were brought up, and then just get your observations or thoughts about that, yeah?

JN: Mm hmm [yes].

MK: Well, they said that it was not clear what the settlement was aiming to achieve. When you got there, did you have a sense of what the mission of the settlement was?

JN: To some degree, to some degree. Not the total thing. Because I think the board many times tended to be very flighty about things, you know, and be rather inconsistent about things. Now, I can't give you examples, but I know I went through a lot on this, that the board would say something today, next time they'll say something else. And somehow, there was, at times, I couldn't understand what the action was, in terms of implementing it. I like to see them take

an action here, and then implement it. If this is not clear then your implementation is going to be hazy. So you want to be clear on this, so you kind of ask questions before they make the decisions, as to what does this involve. To me, a lot of times this transition was not clear. And if this is not clear, then naturally this is not going to be clear. So I don't know, I think there may have been occasions that this clarity was really needed. Shee, it's been such a long time ago.

MK: Another finding of the report was that there was emphasis on uncoordinated departmentalized activities like the day-care, the music, the community center, physical ed, girls' dorm, and summer camp, rather than human and community needs. Now, what's your comment on that finding?

JN: Easier said than done. And I think it's rather hazy. You can interpret it all kinds of ways. And then when you come down to doing something about it, you run against—the mountain gets higher. (Chuckles)

MK: And another finding was that the programs were mainly for young children, and that there were few for older teenagers, and hardly any for adults.

JN: Yeah. I agree with that, yeah. And I think they made improvements, quite a bit of improvements, on the adult phase, but yeah, okay. One of things that, I think, confused a good many people, especially on the board of trustees, was the mission—earlier you had a question about the mission of the settlement house. And the mission statement is a very broad statement, I think. I don't recall exactly what it is now, but I think it was a very broad statement. And the settlement house started off with the needs of the community, way back then when the Rath—Mr. [James A.] Rath's regime. And they dealt essentially with immigrants. And immigrants came from China, Philippines, Japan and so on. Mostly from the Far East. And they had needs: health, welfare, education. They had many needs. And the settlement house attempted to help these individuals to assimilate as they come in. That was looking at what the problems of the community, doing something here at the settlement house. They can't do everything, but they can do something. Part of the pie, kind of thing. And that was great.

As time went on and the needs grew in leaps and bounds, not only for kids but for adolescents and the young adults and the adults, and even the elderly, things get kind of mashed up. All kinds of things that go on. How do you cause a coordinated effort? I mean, I hate that word, "coordination." Coordinated between music program, summer fun program, and so on. I think it's there, it's there already. As long as the staff knows exactly what that settlement house can offer, they could be a major element of coordinating the programs. So they can look at various activities that occur in the settlement house. But I don't know. The mission, I don't think the mission should change, you know. It's the same mission statement, I think that they started the settlement house, which is catering to the needs of the people. And getting people in the neighborhoods to try help themselves.

MK: So it was a broad statement.

JN: That's right, yeah.

MK: To meet the needs of the people.

JN: Yeah.

MK: You know, another finding they found was that few members came from the immediate neighborhood, and I think you touched on that when you spoke about the preschool, the music program, and the swimming situation.

JN: Several other programs that. . . Easy way is to deal with the middle class because they're more docile (chuckles) and easy to handle, you know.

MK: And you mentioned to me how you kind of dealt with it with the preschool situation; you went to see the director of the preschool, you surveyed the population, and you tried to change the situation but there were people against changing that situation.

JN: Well, I think that one of the things that I made myself do is to follow up on all these things that happened at the board of trustees. Like the preschool program, for instance. We couldn't abruptly kick them out. The building already was undergoing scrutiny by the Department of Health. It's an old building, and so on. It's nicely kept, though. But an old building, and so on. And some of the things like that took a natural turn. They needed a special ordinance to keep that preschool going. And either they put in a major reconstruction of that building, then they don't meet the so-called rules and regulations of the health department. So it was there. So we worked with Matsy [Matsuo] Takabuki, who was on the city council at that time, to get us that ordinance, to postpone that closing of the preschool. Now, Mary Sabala liked that. Mary Sabala's supporters in the board of trustees liked that, because here we are trying to hang on, you know. But I'm telling them, "Hey, we can't hang on like this forever, you know. You're going have to make a decision." And to be honest about that, to tell them straightforward, that, "Look, this is what it is. We are trying to help you out, but prolonging it here on this side here with the city council, but this cannot go on forever." I think that prevented conflict. To say that, "Nagoshi, you're a stinking guy," you know, kind of thing. And accuse me of doing all these kinds of things to chase them out.

During the last moment, I think Mary and I, we saw eye to eye on why we (are) doing this, and so on. She understood it. And she was the one that was interpreting to her board members on what was going on. So I had absolutely no problem with that, on that kind of a transition. It was painful, though. I hated to do that. I don't like to be doing that year in and year 'round. (Chuckles) But I think it's a matter of working with the board members on these.

You know they had—the board of directors—they had factions, you know. One small group here support the preschool. Another small group here support the music school. Another one supports the swimming program. Another one, basketball. You know, special interests. Amazing. (Chuckles)

MK: So, a major portion of your job was just working with the factions.

JN: Yeah. And individuals especially. Well, you have any questions on my involvement there, now?

MK: I was wondering, how often this board would meet, and how directly would they affect your work and your decisions?

JN: Well, in some areas, it affected my work quite a bit. In other areas, not much.

MK: Nowadays, they use the term, "micromanagement" sometimes when you have boards, and boards become heavily involved in say, like the day-to-day operation of a business or an organization. They call that "micromanagement." I wonder, during your time, how was it for you? I mean, you had this board with factions (JN chuckles) with special interests.

JN: Well, I tell you, I wasn't there long enough, to come up with an answer to your question. It's not fair. Frankly speaking, I didn't want to leave. Maybe I should tell you now what had happened so that it won't confuse you. After I served Pālama for about a year, little over a year, (the late Dr.) C.K. Chang, who was professor of sociology, asked me to help him write up a proposal for the University [of Hawai'i] on delinquency prevention and control. I said, "Okay, I'll help you." I was working at Pālama at that time. "Yeah, I'll help you." So I got together with him, and I practically wrote the proposal for him. I told him at that time, that, (he) may be thinking that I want this job. But (he was) sadly mistaken. I (was not) interested in being a staff person. Let that be clear because I don't want [him] to think that I'm helping [him] so that I can get a job. And I don't like that, as I told you before. I don't want to get involved with that kind of thing.

Well, we submitted the proposal—he did. And he went to Washington, [D.C.] And they told him, "You got the funding, provided you find one local person knowledgeable in this field, and you can assure me that you have that person."

C.K. comes back, he tells me, "Jack, you got a new job." You know, C.K. is a very frank guy. And sometimes he does things that are out of this world.

So I said, "Don't be silly," I said, you know. "I told you that I was not interested in any job, and I stand by it. I'm not gonna take any job on this," I said. Although I was already interested in getting in the university, and he knew that, too.

Well, he then said, "Jack, what do you want? You tell me what you want, and then we'll work from there, if you want to get back to the university."

"Ha, ha, ha," I said, you know. "I don't think you'll ever be able to fulfill that."

He says, "Well, put it down."

So I put it down. I said, "I want an associate professorship." I think too much if I say, "Give me full professor," you know. "On the highest rank, highest increment level. I want six months of time to work with Pālama on transition, but you (C.K.) pay me from your account." Couple of more other demands I made. And I told C.K., "C.K. here, you'll never (chuckles) fulfill that. All or nothing." So I left.

Following morning, I got a call from him. "Jack, I got it!"

(Laughter)

JN: Isn't that amazing? He said, "I got it."

Said, "What do you mean 'I got it'?"

He said, "Everything you asked for, I got it." And he got a signature of the vice president for academic affairs. (Laughs) That's how it went. (JN sighs.)

MK: So you weren't---originally, you weren't intending to leave . . .

JN: I never did.

MK: You were intending to stay for a longer period.

JN: Yeaah. And it really hurt me. That should be elating for me. I should feel good about the whole thing. But I just didn't feel good about it. I said, "I committed myself too soon." But I thought it was impossible. And even tenure, you know. Those days you could do that, you know. Tenure and whole bit.

MK: So in essence, it became a situation where you really couldn't pass it up.

JN: Yeah.

MK: Considering your own research interests, and where you eventually wanted to head towards. You couldn't pass it up even though you wanted to work at Pālama.

JN: Yeah. I really wanted to work at Pālama for another, I would say, maybe five years. Because I thought that we were making progress. See, one thing that I wanted to establish before anything else, is a group of staff that will work together. And they won't have *kuleanas*, your interest here, your interest there, and so on, which was, I think, one of the problems that they were undergoing before the Trecker study.

MK: And the Trecker study also mentions that problem that you just talked about.

JN: Oh, did they?

MK: Yeah.

JN: Oh. (Chuckles) I forgot now. But I think one of the reasons why you find uncoordinated efforts which calls for coordination, is the staff are not together. If they're not together, you gonna have flimsy kind of, uncoordinated kind of activities going on. But if the staff are together then you have coordination at least in the beginning stages of staff coordination. And they can then, I think, cause other aspects of the settlement program to begin to work together. Coordination, to me, is a myth. You can't coordinate unless some dictator is there to say, "You do that or else," kind of thing. You're dealing with human beings. And I don't think---the state always talks about coordination in our field. One speech I made to the Probation Parole Association, I said that coordination is a myth, because it doesn't happen, especially in the delinquency field. I think if you are to coordinate, either someone has the authority to tell them, "You do this, you do that," and then put 'em together. Otherwise, it's just not gonna happen.

MK: So in the case of Pālama, did you make staff changes, then?

JN: Wherever I could. Now, there wasn't an overturn of staff when I took over. I tried to maintain as many people as possible. There were some areas that needed to be cleaned up. For instance, one of the maintenance people was stealing things from the. . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 27-20-1-97; SIDE ONE

MK: So this is the continuation of Mr. Nagoshi's interview, tape number two.

You were just talking about a maintenance worker.

JN: Yeah. Well, he was taking things home, using the Pālama truck for his own personal use, and so on. And the staff would tell me about it, hoping that I would do something about it. In fact, it's supposed to be a dismissal case, when you come down to it. Oh boy. I really had to go through a lot on that one. I talked to him, and told him that, "This is what you been accused of doing, not only by one person but there's several people that observed you." And I said, "Look, I'm gonna give one more chance." Because he has a family, and they were living in the housing area, and so on. So I told him, "Well, I'm going to give you one more chance, but that's all." And that one chance only lasted about a month or so. And I had to fire him. Because I told him that that was the consequence. Again, unauthorized use of the vehicle. And I hated to do that, I had to do it.

And people like Lorin Gill would say, "About time, Jack," you know. "About time that they got rid of him. Long time ago we should have done that."

I say, "Yeah, that's dirty work, you know." (Chuckles)

MK: On the professional worker side, did you have to make any adjustments?

JN: Not really. It was difficult, because you look at the Trecker report, on the recommendation of services: individual service, individual and group services, community service, and that kind of thing. Broad-based attack, kind of thing. And it's difficult to come up with anything substantial, because, one is, there weren't that many staff people, when you come down to it. They were already busy with what was going on. And to take a bite into something else was something that I think would cause a real destruction in morale. And you needed to be concerned about that. You losing staff too, see, because of that. They go to agencies that have better working conditions. Pālama staff necessarily have to work odd hours. In fact, already, the board has been thinking about implementing a weekend program, including Sundays and holidays. Because that's when the people are available, that's when the kids are available. They're right, you know. I said, "You're right. That's exactly what it is. But if you look at the morale of the staff, now, they gotta work on weekends, nighttime, and so on. It's gonna cause some problems or some difficulties." But they can certainly get accustomed to it, or at least when you recruit them, they'll apply or they'll take a job on the basis of all that. They know that this is the working condition.

So it wasn't easy to administer a program where you have staff problems, there's difficulty in

recruitment, other agencies are trying to steal some of the good ones away from you. And yet you can't pay them any more. Those problems that's—problems galore. And we don't have a personnel man. We had a total part-time or full-time positions, fifty, you know. And that even called for a personnel man, you know. (Chuckles) But all of those kinds of things had to be taken care of. So, where are we now?

MK: So during those days, did communication with the staff improve? That was one of the concerns of the Trecker report, too, that there was not enough communication between staff, and with the administrators and the staff.

JN: Yeah, well, you can meet too often, I mean, you know, if you don't meet then certainly you got problems. But too often, they get tired, and kind of waste of time because you just meeting for the sake of meeting. We got together on that, and I think we made some changes. I think something like this, little more flexible. We not saying every Monday at nine o'clock we will have a staff meeting, you see what I'm saying? That, save Monday at nine o'clock for a staff meeting, but we may not need to meet. And we'll let you know, but save it anyway. Something like that. So that we won't be sitting down there and chewing the fat and they get lots of things to do out there. But staff problems are very difficult at Pālama. And if we were like Queen Lili'uokalani Trust where they have oodles of dough, you know, it's not too bad, you see. But we were in a position where we want good quality staff, at the same time, we want to be able to keep them. Now, that's not easy for Pālama. I think, to me, Pālama has been able to pick up some good quality people, and I think people are willing to work for Pālama, too, in many ways. They prefer Pālama over other agencies. We heard lot of that kind of experience. But, you know, the competition is such that, one is, I think, most people look for money—more pay. And let's face it, that's life. And then they look at working hours, especially people with children. It causes lot of problems. You gotta find a baby-sitter if you gonna go to work, and so on. You have children?

MK: Mm hmm.

JN: How many?

MK: Two.

JN: Young?

MK: Yeah, they're young, so I can understand that.

JN: Sure, so you gotta think of those things. And most of the people that you want to recruit, you don't want to hire old fogies, you want to hire some young, good minds, innovative people. But we recruit 'em, they look for something else that's more lucrative or can take care of. Someplace where they can—little more flexible in baby-sitting my child, things like that. All of those things have to be looked at.

MK: So in those days at Pālama, were the salaries of the employees generally less than what other agencies were offering for comparable work?

JN: It was when I was there. Now, I don't know what improvement they have made, but when I was there it was. We had one guy I thought was a pretty sharp cookie. I forgot his name

already, though. Lorin would probably know. (A Fil-American.) Very natural with kids, you know. I thought he had good future with the Pālama Settlement, but he left. We lost him. Good people are hard to find, and they're eyeing people. And if you find somebody good, then they can make a big offer.

MK: Another thing that the Trecker Report talked about—going away from the staff side, because you've addressed most of the staff problems that they mentioned—the Trecker report said that they felt Pālama was charging too much, that . . .

JN: They were what?

MK: That Pālama Settlement was charging too much . . .

JN: Oh, charging too much.

MK: . . . for its services. Did you make any changes in a fee schedule or do anything of that sort?

JN: I think they were talking about fees, membership fee, I think. We gave it up. I think during my time we gave it up, if I'm not mistaken. I could be wrong, though, you know. We talked about the membership thing. And then, wait now, I think there was income level, or something like that. And then those who are below or on public welfare, and so on, they were given free membership. Something like that. We made some revisions of that if I recall. Which was, again, to be consistent with the Trecker's findings, that you can't charge everybody the same amount because the poor kids are not going to be around, then. And discourage kids from participating. I'm sure that we did something, but exactly what we did, I'm not clear.

MK: Given all these findings and recommendations from the Trecker report where: one, they said to devise new programs to serve the community; help the individual strengthen family life; replace the departments by three units, and I think you've talked about that; unify the organization; clarifying responsibilities of trustees, staff executive director and board; consider dropping some services; reviewing the fee system; involve the staff members and neighborhood people in program decisions. To what extent do you think you were able to implement all these recommendations? (JN laughs.) I know your stay there was very short . . .

JN: Yeah, that's right.

MK: . . . you only had about two years to try to implement, but. . . .

JN: Yeah, I think the direction was there. I can safely say that I think if Lorin Gill could take care of some of his personal hang-ups, you know, he knows the direction that we were going, which I had good support from the board of trustees. I think the trustees, essentially, trusted me, that I was honest, I was forthright, straightforward with them, and I wasn't hiding anything, that everything was out in the open. And that's how I want to be anyway. So it didn't bother me, but I think probably it helped the trustees to make up their minds. "Nagoshi's going this way, we go this way, too," which I appreciated very much. So I had very little, if any, problems with the board, and the board members. Because I think that's the most important group in an organization. They're the decision makers. They're the ones that establish the policies and the direction in which you want to go. If they have a weak one, then the director is gonna take over and then might come up with a case like Larson's situation,

see. So I would say, that the overall direction, I'm satisfied with.

I think some of the board members felt that I was just looking after myself. That I've been there only two years, and already he's leaving, and that kind of thing. It bothered me a hell of a lot. However, I had to make a decision for my own life, too. Nobody's gonna scoop me up and provide for all my needs. I had to make some major decisions. And that was the decision. And that when I talk to Earlene [Piko] and Lorin [Gill], they were the key people on my staff, that I made the decision with a lot of thought. But I felt good things are moving along. And I wanted to see Lorin become the director. He has his faults, but I think he knows what we're trying to do. And he knows what we planned to do, in a position to implement all this. Now, how far he's gone, I'm not so sure because I tried to leave things alone, don't interfere too much. But anytime they called me I was right down there to help them. Because I felt a little guilty about the whole thing, you know. (Chuckles)

MK: So when you left, you were really hoping for Lorin Gill . . .

JN: That's right.

MK: . . . to take over your position because you were moving in the same direction, you were confident that he could carry out some . . .

JN: Yeah, because at least—which the executive director's position is certainly the most important position, you know. It's more important than each board member. And that to get another person to continue with the direction that they (are) going is very difficult. You bring strangers in, and they (need) to get oriented to what they're doing, and so on. But Lorin is there, he's been there for many years, I think he's competent. And I think he's—certainly he's very honest. I have absolutely no doubt about his honesty and his integrity. He rubs people the wrong way many times. He tends to be a little bit too frank, and so on, but that's him. I guess you gotta understand that guy, you know. You're gonna talk to him, right?

MK: Mm hmm. So you left, joined the University of Hawai'i, but even after you joined the University of Hawai'i, when they needed help, you were right there to help.

JN: Yeah, well, as a delinquency prevention effort, if you look at agencies in the community who are involved in delinquency prevention, Pālāma stands out. So even with the university, now, establishment of the Youth Development (and Research) Center [today known as Center for Youth Research], Pālāma became very prominent in our efforts. Our mission, our task on that university center, was to introduce innovations in delinquency prevention control. And Pālāma was one of our laboratories. And a good number of programs started off in Pālāma. As I mentioned to you over the phone, there was this guy, from Alabama mind you, he got a lot of grants from Washington [D.C.], and he was involved in innovative programs. And we befriended him, because we were looking at the same things. We were looking at operant conditioning. And we were trying to implement a program in Hawai'i. Pālāma was one of the first agencies to design a program. That's the one you were talking about.

MK: Oh, the football [i.e., the Pākōlea Program].

JN: "You like play football, you (turn out for) practice. You practice, (and you do school work, then you can play)." And that's the way it started, you see. And this guy from Alabama came

down, he was a speaker, too, at one of our conferences. And he went to see Pālama's program. He says, "Wow! I've never seen anything like this before! Kids doing homework on a pool table? They're sitting down on the steps and doing their academic work. How you guys do it?" you know. (Chuckles) But we built in motivation into it.

MK: So that program was started by the juvenile delinquency prevention center at Pālama? Or. . .

JN: No, no. We . . .

MK: But it was tied in?

JN: Yeah, Pālama was one of the agencies. We were involved with most of the correctional agencies, like the prison, and conditional release centers, and Ko'olau [i.e., Hawai'i Youth Correctional Facility], and all of that. And then the prevention agencies, and then school programs. We have all the prevention programs in schools. And the last couple of years was essentially we were trying to implement the behavioral approach to these issues. We found it to be the most effective—it's not the answer to all the problems, but it's the most effective, so far as we know.

MK: So you used Pālama Settlement sort of as one of your labs?

JN: That's right. We didn't say that, you know, but it became that. So people that want to know, we say, "Go down Pālama. Get permission to go down and take a look at their program. You'll find them studying, doing their academic work at six o'clock, and they're all motivated to do it."

And that guy from Alabama is right, that he sees kids doing homework on the pool table instead of playing pool.

MK: So that was, like, one of the strong programs, yeah?

JN: Yeah.

MK: At Pālama. Now, although you are not formally with Pālama Settlement, over the years, did you notice other strong points or weaknesses of Pālama?

JN: Yeah. I think they fell backwards on staff selection. I don't know how—did you ask Earlene that same question?

MK: No, not yet.

JN: Oh, you haven't talked to her yet?

MK: No, I've talked to her but we didn't get there yet.

JN: Oh, oh, I see. I think she would be a natural person to answer that question. I was a little too removed to answer that. But it seemed to me, that—you see, even if they were implementing an innovative program, a program approach, there were flaws, and needed to correct those. And I wasn't the only one involved in that. The person that worked for me, Bob Omura, was

the primary investigator on this. He would go down and try to help them to implement the programs. And he'd come back and feedback to me, how they doing. What they doing right, what they doing wrong, and so on. And it comes out all the time, that one big area that they need to really work hard on is the staff selection. Somehow, I guess workers try to feed their egos, I guess, and they forget that it's the kids first. Your clients are first, and your needs are secondary to that. Although, sure, everybody needs recognition, and so on. But to make that recognition hinder the kids' so-called benefit, is a big mistake. So we find that they are fulfilling their needs, but not the needs of the kids. And we try to point that kind of thing out to them. In some areas, they're able to make some changes. But others, kind of impossible to make changes.

MK: And then as a professional social worker, former director of Pālama Settlement, and also as a academic, what do you view as Pālama Settlement's contributions here? What good has Pālama Settlement done?

JN: (Laughs) Well, I haven't been involved in their program for quite a some time now, since I retired, that's about ten years already. I have had absolutely no contact. So I don't think I can make that kind of an assessment. It would be unfair, I think.

MK: I guess I have one last question. Pālama Settlement grew out of the settlement philosophy, that staff live on the grounds, live in the community that they service. What are your feelings about that philosophy?

JN: I think it's old-fashioned. I don't think it's that necessary to have the staff live within or adjacent to, or whatever, the facility. I think to some degree, it might be better for staff to live away from your work place. I think for their own mental health, maybe. Instead of working eight hours a day, you get involved in it, you working ten hours, twelve hours a day. And so your efficiency goes down. So I don't know, nobody made a study on that. But my biased opinion might be that perhaps that isn't a grave problem. I think maybe it works the other way. That staff needs their rest, too. And that maybe living away from it forces them to not to be involved that deeply. I mean, they should be deeply involved, but not that much. So I think some of the board members expressed that, you know. They asked me if I would live in that apartment up there. I said, "No." I didn't say it but in my heart I was telling them, I think, that I didn't want to get married to the job. It's a job, I'll accept the task, but I'm not going to marry the job. I think most people will probably feel that way. And I think you might be more efficient if you limited to your contact during office hours. You don't have to be so stickler about that office hours thing. I like flexible approach. This week, I gotta put in fifty hours because this is what's happening. The following week or two weeks later, well, now, resolved that. Now this week I can take it easy, I'll work forty hours. I mean, you know, that kind of flexibility I think is needed. To me, the mental health of the workers are quite important, too.

MK: Yeah, I'm going to bring the interview to a close, but I was wondering if you had any other comments about Pālama Settlement and your experience there.

JN: No, it brings back nostalgia as I talk, because I never talked like this about them, you know. I still have a soft spot in my heart for Pālama. I do. When I pass through there on the freeway, I'm always looking at the big gymnasium. Yeah, that was my stomping grounds, you know. And this is what happened in certain areas, and so on. It's the kind of program that gets into you. People like Lorin probably have much more of that kind of feeling than I do. I don't

know. It's too bad that I wasn't able to spend at least couple of more years with them. It's kind of a regret. I tell my wife that every time.

MK: Okay, I'm going to end it here.

JN: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW

Reflections of Pālama Settlement

Volume I

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